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TRIAL SET FOR ALLEGED KINGPIN OF COCAINE RING
ATLANTA

A man accused by the government of being the mastermind behind the largest cocaine trafficking ring in the nation's history goes on trial Monday in U.S. District Court here.

Harold Rosenthal, a former Atlanta bail bondsman, will be tried along with 18 other people amid some of the tightest security ever used at Atlanta's federal courthouse. The trial could last as long as three months, authorities said.

An indictment in January charged Rosenthal and 29 other people with smuggling at least five tons of cocaine into the country between September 1981 and January 1984. Eleven of those charged in the indictment have not been captured.

In September, Colombian police and U.S. agents armed with machine guns arrested Rosenthal as he sat in his car, stuck in traffic in Bogota, Colombia.

Rosenthal had escaped in September 1981, from a federal prison in Memphis, Tenn., where he was serving a sentence on a drug conviction.

Rosenthal's lawyers have contended in court papers that he had special permission from the government to smuggle drugs because he also was acting as a CIA agent in Colombia.

They say the CIA engineered Rosenthal's escape from the federal prison in Memphis and then gave him clearance to deal cocaine in exchange for information he gave the agency on ties between Colombian Marxist terrorist groups and the Soviet Union.

The defense arguments were contained in documents filed under the Classified Information Procedures Act, which requires attorneys to notify the government if evidence likely to be given at a trial might compromise national security.

The documents allege that the CIA arranged for Rosenthal's prison escape through two reputed mobsters with ties to Rosenthal and that the Drug Enforcement Administration has documents corroborating evidence of the CIA's involvement.

Ted Swift, a spokesman for the DEA in Washington, said of the defense allegations, "It would be totally improper for us to respond to that." DEA officials in Atlanta also declined to comment, as did CIA spokesmen in McLean, Va.

Rosenthal has been held in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary while awaiting trial. In February, FBI agents said they had intercepted letters he sent from his cell detailing a \$1 million escape plan that included use of a team of hired commandos.